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communication terminal in the form of a short message service (SMS) message.

13. A free-call certificate service system comprising a
5 free-call certificate management server including:

a free-call certificate management database for storing information regarding sales of free-call certificates sold to one or more customers, said free-call certificate sale information containing sub-total free-call times allocated 10 respectively to the customers within the range of a total free-call time allocated from at least one communication company;

15 a free-call request information receiver for receiving free-call request information containing a telephone number of a specific one of said customers acquiring a specific one of the free-call certificates from a specific one of one or more customer terminals held respectively by said customers;

an authentication processor for searching the sale information stored in said free-call certificate management 20 database for sale information corresponding to said specific customer's telephone number to determine whether the corresponding sale information is present in the stored sale information, and performing an authentication process based on the determination result; and

25 a free-call request information transmitter for

transmitting said free-call request information authenticated by said authentication processor to a communication company server managed by said communication company so that the communication company server can deduct the amount of money corresponding to an individual free-call time allocated to 5 said specific free-call certificate acquired by said specific customer from communication fees to be charged to said specific customer's telephone number contained in said free-call request information.

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14. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 13, wherein said free-call certificate management server further includes:

15 a free-call certificate purchase request information transmitter for transmitting free-call certificate purchase request information containing said total free-call time to said communication company server; and

20 a free-call time allocation information receiver for receiving, from said communication company server, free-call time allocation information corresponding to said total free-call time contained in said free-call certificate purchase request information.

25 15. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 14, wherein said free-call certificate

management server further includes:

a free-call certificate purchase request information receiver for receiving free-call certificate purchase request information containing each of said sub-total free-call times from each of said customer terminals; and

a free-call time allocation information transmitter for transmitting free-call time allocation information corresponding respectively to said sub-total free-call times contained in said free-call certificate purchase request information received by said free-call certificate purchase request information receiver respectively to said customer terminals.

16. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 15, wherein said free-call certificate management server further includes a settlement requestor for transmitting settlement request information to at least one financial company server to request it to settle said customers' accounts for prices for purchases of said free-call certificates, respectively, and then receiving results of settlement from said financial company server.

17. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 16, wherein said free-call certificate management server further includes:

a refund request information receiver for receiving
refund request information containing said specific customer's
telephone number and a returned amount of a corresponding one
of said sub-total free-call times from said specific customer
5 terminal; and

a refund processor for, if said authentication processor
searches the sale information stored in said free-call
certificate management database for the sale information
corresponding to said specific customer's telephone number to
10 determine whether the corresponding sale information is
present in the stored sale information, and authenticates said
specific customer holding said specific customer terminal as a
result of the determination, requesting said financial company
server through said settlement requestor to pay said specific
15 customer a refund corresponding to the returned free-call time
amount contained in said refund request information received
by said refund request information receiver, and updating said
free-call certificate management database on the basis of said
refund request information.

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18. The free-call certificate service system as set
forth in any one of claims 13 to 17, further comprising said
communication company server adapted for allocating said total
free-call time to said free-call certificate management server
25 and, in response to said free-call request information from

said free-call certificate management server, deducting the amount of money corresponding to said individual free-call time allocated to said specific free-call certificate acquired by said specific customer from the communication fees to be charged to said specific customer's telephone number contained 5 in said free-call request information.

19. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 18, further comprising said at least one 10 financial company server adapted for processing the settlement associated with said free-call certificate purchase request information from each of said customer terminals.

20. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 19, further comprising said one or more 15 customer terminals, each adapted for receiving guide information about a free-call service from said free-call certificate management server and performing a telephone call using a free-call certificate issued to a corresponding one of 20 said customers.

21. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 20, wherein each of said customer terminals 25 is a wireless communication terminal, said wireless communication terminal being any one of a mobile telephone or

PDA.

22. The free-call certificate service system as set forth in claim 21, wherein said free-call certificate management server is adapted to transmit said guide information about said free-call service to said wireless communication terminal in the form of an SMS message.

company so that the communication company server can deduct the amount of money corresponding to an individual free-call time allocated to the specific free-call certificate acquired by the specific customer from communication fees to be charged 5 to the specific customer's telephone number contained in the free-call request information.

Brief Description of the Drawings

10 The above and other objects, features and other advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

15 Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing the configuration of a free-call certificate service system according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2a is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the free-call certificate service system of Fig. 1 in the case where free-call certificates are sold in a resale scheme;

20 Fig. 2b is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the free-call certificate service system of Fig. 1 in the case where free-call certificates are sold in a cooperative purchase scheme;

25 Fig. 3 is a block diagram showing the configuration of a free-call certificate service system according to a second

database on the basis of the refund request information.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a free-call certificate service system comprising a free-call certificate management server including: a free-call certificate management database for storing information regarding sales of free-call certificates sold to one or more customers, the free-call certificate sale information containing sub-total free-call times allocated respectively to the customers within the range of a total free-call time allocated from at least one communication company; a free-call request information receiver for receiving free-call request information containing a telephone number of a specific one of the customers acquiring a specific one of the free-call certificates from a specific one of one or more customer terminals held respectively by the customers; an authentication processor for searching the sale information stored in the free-call certificate management database for sale information corresponding to the specific customer's telephone number to determine whether the corresponding sale information is present in the stored sale information, and performing an authentication process based on the determination result; and a free-call request information transmitter for transmitting the free-call request information authenticated by the authentication processor to a communication company server managed by the communication

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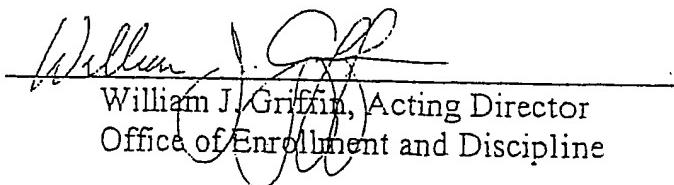
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